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TAGS: PREL PGOV MEPN KPAL PTER EG UK

SUBJECT: READOUT OF BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY BECKETT'S  
EGYPT VISIT

Classified by: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political  
Affairs William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) UK Embassy Poloff Martin Hetherington provided emboff with a brief readout of UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett's September 7 visit to Egypt, where she met separately with President Mubarak, EGIS Chief Soliman, Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, and Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa. The primary issues discussed during her 75-minute meeting with Mubarak were the Arab-Israeli peace process, Lebanon, Sudan, and Iran. Hetherington said Mubarak reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to stopping Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, yet was critical of U.S. policy for allowing Iran the opportunity to expand its regional influence, and counseled strongly against the military option. Mubarak also reportedly lamented the USG refusal to engage Syrian President Bashar Asad -- a policy he said which pushed the Syrians into Iran's arms.

¶12. (C) On the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hetherington said EGIS Chief Soliman briefed Beckett on his ongoing negotiations for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Soliman reportedly described ongoing GOE mediation efforts, and blamed Hamas' Syrian-based leadership for hindering his efforts. Beckett previewed PM Blair's regional tour, which Hetherington described as primarily a "listening tour," with the announcements by Olmert and Abbas to meet without pre-conditions as its core achievement. Hetherington confided that Beckett shared with the Egyptians and Arab League Secretary General Moussa UK political support for efforts to convene a meeting at the UN Security Council to address the Arab-Israeli conflict.

¶13. (C) Hetherington said the Egyptians chose not to discuss Iraq, despite Beckett's previous stop in Baghdad en route to Cairo. Nevertheless, Beckett learned that President Mubarak had just invited Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki for an official visit to Cairo. Similarly, AL SecGen Moussa avoided discussion of Iraq, which suggested to the UK side that League efforts on Iraqi reconciliation had slipped. (Note: Iraqi FM Hoshyar Zebari met privately with Egyptian Intelligence Chief Soliman during his September 5-7 visit to Cairo for an Arab League ministerial, and told an Egyptian newspaper that Iraq would post an Ambassador to Egypt by year's end. End note.)

¶14. (C) Beckett also requested GOE leaders to press Sudanese President Bashir to allow UN peace-keepers in Darfur, in accordance with UNSCR 1706. The Egyptians, Hetherington reported, downplayed UK concerns over lack of AU control in Darfur and the increasingly desperate humanitarian situation there. Beckett, he added, did not come away from her meetings convinced that the Egyptians were committed to full and prompt implementation of 1706. Echoing Arab League and GOE public statements on the subject, the Egyptians expressed concerns over the timing of UNSCR 1706, and the need for

Khartoum's acceptance of a UN force in Darfur.  
JONES